

ABOUT GROWTH

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION ABOUT GROWTH MANAGEMENT

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Washington State
Department of
Community, Trade and
Economic Development

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CTED is preparing a 15th Anniversary Report on the Growth Management Act, which will include information about how growth management is working in local communities today. A snapshot of that report is featured in this issue of *About Growth*. Many challenges remain but, as these articles show, growth management is making a difference in the lives of the residents of Washington.

Planning for growth

Tools for planning for growth

By Jorge Vega, Bellingham Planning Director

The Growth Management Act (GMA) requires communities to plan for growth in a coordinated and thoughtful manner. It also requires an early and continuous public process that informs growth decisions. The act recommends communities plan for that growth in a way that will encourage development in urban areas where adequate public facilities and services exist. This reduces the conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development.

The act mandates that communities adopt a 20-year population projection, and that our plans make room for that additional population within the urban areas. All the cities in Whatcom County and the county came to consensus on the population projection approved by the county. Once agreement is reached, the act provides for local control to determine how we plan for the additional population. The population requirement compels the community to assess its priorities while meeting the required goal.

The act requires that we be prepared for anticipated growth by planning for it.



CTED/Rita R. Robinson

Growth management is helping Bellingham grow in a thoughtful, coordinated manner.

The GMA: A worthwhile challenge

By The Honorable Mark Foutch, Mayor, City of Olympia

Although Olympia and Thurston County led the way in interjurisdictional cooperation with an urban growth boundary established by 1988, growth management was a challenge under the new law. We could no longer count on large lots, cul de sac development, and ever-wider roads.

Instead we substituted high-quality subdivision and building design, connected streets, multimodal transportation, historic preservation, and parks, play fields, and open space. Then we had to decide how to pay for the public amenities that would be key tradeoffs for increased housing densities.

We're starting to see the results of our work as new subdivisions and old business corridors adopt new forms. Infill is happening in older neighborhoods. Olympia's downtown is vital and attractive. People have new transportation choices as bike lanes are extended and transit improvements continue. Our voters have approved tax increases for transit, parks, and sidewalk construction.

Also valuable is the conversation with our residents, property owners, and businesses. Public involvement is increasing the understanding of planning, helping us to make the right choices and assisting us in paying for them.

Growth management improves county's livability

By The Honorable John Ladenburg, Pierce County Executive

In 1990 Pierce County was known as the poster child for the GMA. With an obsolete comprehensive plan followed by inconsistent regulations, perhaps the title wasn't undeserved. The GMA changed all that. Today, Pierce County has adopted a plan that can be characterized as a business plan for the county's future.

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CTED is the state's lead agency charged with providing financial and technical resources to build livable and sustainable communities.

Juli Wilkerson, CTED Director

CTED administers the state's Growth Management Act. Its role is to assist and enable local governments to design their own programs to fit local needs and opportunities, consistent with the GMA.

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About Growth features topics that are of high interest and strives to reflect a wide range of views from various perspectives. The views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily CTED's opinions or positions.

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Communities benefiting from growth management planning

By Juli Wilkerson

Director, Washington State Department of
Community, Trade and Economic Development

This year is the 15th Anniversary of the passage of the GMA.

In 1990 a group of state leaders – visionaries – set out to create a land use system that would work in our state. Some wanted to follow Oregon's lead with a large role for state government, including the certification of local plans. Others wanted a bottom-up approach, with a stronger role for local governments in determining how they would carry out the law.

A diverse group of legislators, lobbyists, planners, citizens, and local and state officials came together to pass the law in 1990, which was amended in 1991 with details on how it was to be carried out.

It's encouraging that Washington was able to pass a growth management law. Only 13 states have done so. A unique combination of events and state leaders made it happen.

Recently, the Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (CTED) staff conducted oral history interviews with 16 of the leaders that were involved in the passage of the GMA. We wanted to capture this important history before the stories were lost. The interviews are fascinating.

Joe King, former speaker of the state House of Representatives who spearheaded the effort to pass the GMA, said he wanted to make sure that as the state grew it measured the impacts of growth and had infrastructure in place for the impacts. "It wasn't intended to be anti-growth. It wasn't even intended to slow growth. It was saying, 'Look, if we're going to grow, let's figure out how we're going to get people to work. Let's figure out what we're going to do about

sewage capacity. Let's figure out how we're going to handle the services that growth is going to require.'"

Senator Mary Margaret Haugen, D-Camano Island, chair of the House Local Government Committee at the time, said citizens were asking some tough questions about growth. "When you live on an island, you get pretty paranoid when it seems the number of homes doubles in just a few years. My neighbors were really concerned about the impact of unplanned growth. 'What are we going to do about services like schools and roads for all these new families?' How do we make sure we're protecting our drinking water, natural environment and quality of life? And who ends up paying for all the needed infrastructure improvements, the new developers or long-established residents?"

CTED is preparing a 15th Anniversary Report on the GMA that will include the history of the act as told in the oral histories. The report also will include information about how growth management is working in local communities today. To gather this information, we've asked local governments and state leaders to write short articles about the single, most important way that the GMA is helping their community or organization reach its goals and vision for the future. Snapshots of these articles are featured in this issue of *About Growth*.

Growth management planning has come a long way in 15 years. Communities are making tough decisions on the best ways to grow. Many challenges remain but, as these articles from local governments show, growth management is making a difference in the lives of the residents of Washington.

Growth management improves county's livability

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The single most important way GMA has benefited Pierce County has been the establishment of the urban/rural line. Growth is directed into urban areas, which stops sprawl in rural areas. This allows infill and redevelopment of urban areas, more efficiently delivers infrastructure and services, and makes citizens and investors aware of what to expect in their communities and from county government.

In every sense, the GMA has helped turn Pierce County into one of the most livable communities in the country.

Capital facilities

Growth management aids capital facilities planning

By Rick White, Kennewick Planning Director

Kennewick is fortunate to enjoy a dedicated source of infrastructure funding and a system of public improvements that keeps the city "ahead of the curve" in dealing with issues of growth. However, Kennewick didn't have a successful history of integrating long-range planning with public improvements. The GMA provided the framework for staff to shape the community's vision into goals and policies and then provide an array of mechanisms to carry out that vision.

During GMA early stages, our appointed and elected officials didn't fully embrace the planning model that the GMA provided. As Kennewick worked with the GMA and saw successes, resistance has been reduced. Our community leaders now view GMA differently, as a means to achieve an end. The means are the integration and consistency requirements of the act, and the end is carrying out the city council's vision for the community.

Housing

Communities planning locally and regionally for housing needs

By Arthur Sullivan, Program Manager, A Regional Coalition for Housing

A critical component of the GMA is the requirement for communities to assess and plan for housing needs for all segments of the population in their community and to do so in the context of county-wide needs.

This requirement is creating "conversations," leading communities to better understand that they have a direct role in addressing housing needs in their community and the region.

These conversations, which may not have occurred without the GMA, are leading efforts to increase affordable housing in our region, such as:

- ◆ Allowing higher density housing in downtowns and commercial centers.
- ◆ Permitting accessory dwelling units, cottages, and multiplexes in single-family neighborhoods.
- ◆ Granting density bonuses in exchange for including moderate priced housing.
- ◆ Agreeing that employment and housing goals need to be better balanced throughout the region.
- ◆ Creating an interlocal agency, such as ARCH in East King County, to pool resources to fund housing throughout the region.

Housing solutions 15 years into the GMA

By Kurt Creager, CEO, Vancouver Housing Authority

Housing has a fascinating constituency: REALTORS®, builders, developers, nonprofit organizations, consumers, and social welfare advocates.

Local planners and policy makers must, under the GMA, fashion an acceptable compromise between these interests, and craft a comprehensive plan Housing Element that provides an adequate supply of housing for all economic segments of society. They must also zone an adequate supply of land for single-family and multifamily developments as well as manufactured home parks, group homes, and other government-supported housing.

Some good has come from this planning:

- ◆ It strengthened state expectations for local plans and ordinances by creating a common basis for population projections.
- ◆ Citizens have fuller disclosure on the cost of growth.
- ◆ Zoning and comprehensive plan designations must conform.
- ◆ Affordable housing has a seat at the table when policy choices between competing interests are debated.

Creation of the GMA may not have solved housing supply and affordability problems, but it made potential solutions possible. It has created a healthy conversation locally about what kind of community we want to nurture and create over time.

Historic preservation

Growth management aids historic preservation, economic development

By Timothy Bishop, Director, Walla Walla Downtown Foundation

In 2003 the Downtown Walla Walla Foundation was faced with the monumental challenge of retaining our largest retail anchor, the Bon Marche (now Macy's) department store. The store received a lucrative offer to relocate to a nearby mall.

For Downtown Walla Walla, this move would have been disastrous and a threat to undermine nearly two decades of revitalization.

The foundation couldn't match the financial incentives being offered. Our only tool was the development of a 20-year downtown plan. We convinced Macy's leadership the plan would address key issues affecting the economic viability of their downtown location. The plan was funded in part by two growth management grants.

In 2004 the downtown plan was adopted, and Macy's stayed.

In Walla Walla, growth management became an important tool in the revitalization of our historic downtown by demonstrating that with good planning based on solid economics a traditional, pedestrian-oriented downtown can still provide viable economic opportunity in today's economy. Without growth management, our downtown would have lost its last department store.

Public participation

The importance of GMA planning in Richland

By Rick Simon, Richland Development Services Manager

A number of significant achievements are occurring in Richland due to growth management planning.

The city has seen the development of Columbia Point – a city-owned, mixed-use project. Other capital facilities include a community center, park system expansion, and arterial street improvements. However, the most important GMA impact has been to raise the level of awareness of planning issues among city officials and residents.

While Richland has a rich tradition in planning, as one of only a few planned communities in the Northwest, the GMA has raised the knowledge of and interest in planning. The requirement that local governments must carry out their plans has moved planning from a behind the scenes operation into the forefront in Richland.

I expect this level of community interest will translate to other important achievements in the years to come.

Public involvement important to citizens

By Larry K. Frazier, AICP, Bainbridge Island Director of Planning and Community Development



Citizens of Bainbridge Island make their views known on issues important to them, such as historic preservation.

The citizens of Bainbridge Island are fortunate to have the GMA as a primary tool to assist them in defining the future livability of their island.

The city was incorporated in 1991. The 1990 GMA was timely for Bainbridge Island because it assisted the city in preparing its first comprehensive plan, adopted in 1995.

Of importance to Bainbridge Island is the GMA requirement for early and continuous public involvement. In response to this requirement, a communitywide survey was undertaken in 1992 to understand residents' vision for the future.

A 2002 survey was carried out to provide guidance to update the city's plan. In addition, the city developed an extensive public information process utilizing local television, the Internet, and other outreach

programs. The plan update was adopted in 2004.

The GMA requirement for public involvement has played a large part in the city's planning programs and will continue to do so in the future.

Achieving community goals

How growth management helps Spokane achieve its goals for the future

By Steve Franks, City of Spokane Planning Director

The City of Spokane's new comprehensive plan was adopted in 2001 after six years of GMA planning. Spokane's consistent, unified, and relatively succinct comprehensive plan replaced a host of documents that had been prepared and amended (and sometimes virtually forgotten) over several decades. The city's plan includes key components required by growth management: consistency within the plan, connecting the plan to budgets and financing, addressing concurrency, and ensuring citizen participation as we carry out and refine the plan.

Growth management is helping Spokane achieve its desired future by providing us with a realistic, useable, and pragmatic tool to help it get there.

The single most important GMA ingredient

By The Honorable Ron Sims, King County Executive

The success of GMA has forced us to rethink the value of our cities and the costs of sprawl to our infrastructure and our society. We're now looking at our urban areas with a revised vision that will rekindle the awe and excitement of our urban spaces.

Before the GMA, we took our urban areas for granted. But since that time, we've grown to understand the public health benefits of living in communities where we can easily walk and take public transportation to school, work, and shopping.

Fifteen years after the GMA became law, many of our urban areas are bustling communities. We have added apartments, condominiums, townhouses, and cottage houses to the mix of housing choices. Our urban areas are becoming vibrant, 24/7 communities.

Regional planning



Growth management is helping cities such as Redmond plan for the future.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE CITY OF REDMOND

The benefits of regional urban planning

By Roberta Lewandowski, Planning Director, City of Redmond

The collaborative effort to designate an urban growth area (UGA) in King County is having a beneficial impact on urban quality.

For Redmond, being within the UGA means higher quality commercial investments and more varied housing as well as long-term protection of nearby rural and resource lands. The commercial investor who built Redmond Town Center said he wouldn't have built the center without growth management. He relied on the regional plan indicating there wouldn't be another large retail area springing up in the rural areas east of the city.

Many urban areas have seen their center cities and first-ring suburbs decay as publicly supported new growth attracts jobs and population ever further from the center. In King County, the UGA has helped us avoid that scenario.

Regional coordination helps city reach its goals

By The Honorable Jerry Smith, Mayor, City of Mountlake Terrace

The most significant benefit from carrying out the GMA is better regional coordination.

Mountlake Terrace has always supported planning for community development and environmental protection. Under the GMA, we've made even greater progress, especially when state grants are available to help.

In 1993 and 2003, we joined with other cities and Snohomish County to develop county-wide planning policies. That gave us a framework to plan for future population and jobs in our urban growth areas and to know that sprawl would be limited in the countryside.

Having regional policies made it easier to plan for roadway and utility improvements because we knew where growth was going. It takes all of us working together to solve transportation needs.

Regional coordination is more important than ever. With state requirements and local knowledge, we've made a good start at reaching our goals.

The GMA and regional planning

By Bob Drewel, Executive Director, Puget Sound Regional Council

Over the last 15 years, the GMA has been instrumental in advancing regional planning. A core feature of the act is its emphasis on interjurisdictional coordination, which can be seen in the region's shared vision and strategies.

When the Central Puget Sound region first adopted VISION 2020 in 1990 – the same year the GMA became law – it provided a common growth management and transportation vision, but had limited status locally. It satisfied certain federal regional planning expectations, but localities could use it or ignore it. The GMA gave this vision a formal role – the regional strategy became the foundation for multicounty planning policies. For the first time, the region had an integrated framework for achieving goals that built on and supported local, county-wide, regional, and state planning efforts.

This framework guided the development of the region's transportation plan – *Destination 2030* – and placed a new emphasis on the importance of monitoring our progress toward achieving regional goals.

This sense of a common regional purpose also lies at the heart of The Prosperity Partnership – a coalition of government, business, labor, and community leaders that has developed a common strategy for long-term economic vitality integrated with land use and transportation planning.

As we strive to create vibrant and accessible communities and to preserve and enhance our quality of life, the GMA has helped to foster a belief in the region that many of the challenges we face are best addressed together.

The GMA and Kirkland's Vision

The Honorable Mary-Alyce Burleigh, Mayor, City of Kirkland

This year, Kirkland will celebrate its Centennial. The original town plan envisioned by its founder, British industrialist Peter Kirk, was to create a "Pittsburgh of the West." We adopted our first comprehensive plan in 1963, and then rewrote it in 1977. In 1995, the city overhauled its plan as a result of the GMA. The GMA sparked us to reflect on our vision for our future.

The GMA required the city to accommodate growth. The new plan did this while protecting residential neighborhoods, environmental resources, and our quality of life. Attention was directed to creating compact, mixed-use urban activity centers with extensive pedestrian and transit-oriented amenities. Our downtown now has a rich mix of commercial, residential, civic, and cultural activities. Over the past 15 years, we've embraced the principle of creating vibrant places and a sense of community. Kirkland has been forged into a tapestry of desirable neighborhoods, waterfront parks, and a walkable downtown.

This vision is being used to transform other areas of the city into centers and gathering places while maintaining our human scale and small-town feel. The GMA gave us the opportunity to consciously shape our community to create an attractive, vibrant, and inviting place to live, work, play, and visit.

Compact urban development



Up-front environmental review

The GMA and city design and development

By Bill Trimm, AICP, Planning Director, City of Mill Creek

One of the most important parts of Mill Creek's GMA comprehensive plan is the objective to build a compact, walkable, mixed-use community that can reduce vehicle trips and inspire livability. This objective is based on several key GMA goals.

GMA goals require urban growth areas to limit low-density sprawl while concentrating urban growth in cities where urban services, including multimodal transportation facilities, can be provided. Without the GMA requirement to reduce low-density sprawl, the city wouldn't have been as successful in encouraging

companies to build compact, mixed-use developments in the city's core rather than continued outward expansion.

Also, a GMA "planned action" was used by the city to prepare the SR 527 Corridor Subarea Plan. The plan, environmental impact statement, design guidelines, and planned action ordinance allowed the city to create high-density neighborhoods with more than 1,150 new residential units. These neighborhoods are connected to the Town Center with streets, sidewalks, trails, and transit service and contribute to the center's economic and livable success.



Compact, walkable neighborhoods are being built in Mill Creek.

CTED/RITA R. ROBISON

Resource lands

Growth management planning in Franklin County

By The Honorable Frank H. Brock, Neva J. Corkrum, and Robert E. Koch,
Franklin County Board of County Commissioners

In 2005 Franklin County completed its growth management update for the county's comprehensive plan.

The plan encourages urban development in urban growth areas (UGAs) while continuing to conserve the county's agricultural lands and the farming industry. The plan concludes that agriculture will continue to be a major industry in Franklin County. A result of the recent growth management planning was the additional designation of 62,000 acres of agricultural land.

During the past decade, Franklin County's population increased 37 percent with the majority of the growth occurring in the county's UGAs.

In total, Franklin County consists of about 809,000 acres of which about 680,000 acres are actively irrigated, dry land, and rangeland agriculture.

Environmental quality

Environmental quality important to city

By The Honorable Ava Frisinger, Mayor, City of Issaquah

When the GMA was passed, an Issaquah stakeholder group identified what citizens valued the most – the natural environment, wildlife corridors, streams, and permanent open space that characterize Issaquah and neighboring areas.

Issaquah sits inside the eastern and southern edge of King County's urban growth area (UGA). Growth targets are established for cities inside the UGA. Only minimal growth is allowed outside the UGA; therefore, the risk of dense development directly to the south and east of Issaquah is greatly reduced.

In the mid-1990s, Issaquah directed potential King County development into Issaquah thus meeting its growth targets with 3,250 housing units and 1.3 million square feet of commercial space in an urban village. In return, more than 1,500 acres of permanent open space in King County were preserved adjacent to Issaquah's city limits.

Similarly, in 1999, the city added 1,700 housing units and 800,000 square feet of commercial space to a second urban village. Again, the city required the preservation of almost 400 acres of public open space in Issaquah. The GMA has helped Issaquah keep what it values most.

Organizations speak out on growth management

By Rita R. Robison, AICP, *About Growth* Editor

Growth management interest groups have a variety of opinions on how the GMA is working. Some of their views are expressed here.

Association of Washington Cities

The Honorable Pam Carter, President, Association of Washington Cities and Councilmember, City of Tukwila

"While it's difficult to speak with one voice for all of the 281 cities and towns in Washington, including the 248 with a full set of GMA requirements, this bottom-up approach to local planning has helped cities to define and meet their local goals in ways most appropriate for their communities. While many cities had developed comprehensive plans long before the adoption of the GMA, the act established a new framework within which we engaged our citizens in examining the challenges and benefits that accompany growth. In many communities, the required emphasis on public participation brought a new level of citizen engagement and a vision that more accurately reflected the views of the community."

Cascade Land Conservancy

Gene Duvernoy, President, Cascade Land Conservancy

"The GMA has matured and continues to serve the region well. When the Cascade Land Conservancy goes about its efforts to preserve important landscapes, it provides a legal framework for our work."

American Farmland Trust

Don Stuart, Northwest Field Director, American Farmland Trust

"Unless some mechanism holds down the price of farmland to what farm businesses can afford, those lands will continue to fall out of agriculture and our farming industry will continue to disappear. That is the function growth management serves for agriculture. Once land has been bought and sold under protected agricultural zoning, a settled, established, dependable growth management is hugely important to the future viability of agriculture and to its continued contributions to economic, social, and environmental quality in Washington's communities."

Futurewise

Tim Trohimovich, Planning Director, Futurewise

"Public participation has been called the 'very core of the GMA.' Futurewise, as a citizen-based organization, agrees. The best plans combine the public's local knowledge with the technical knowledge of planning professionals and the judgments of city and county elected officials. The GMA provides a framework that communities can use to fashion an effective and economical public involvement process that fits the issues and the community."



Organizations report the GMA is assisting in their efforts to conserve farmlands.

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Washington Public Ports Association

Patrick Jones, Executive Director, Washington Public Ports Association

"The occasion of the 15th birthday of the GMA is an excellent time to reflect on this important law. For port districts, it has been an alternatively easy and uneasy partnership. On the positive side, the GMA has catalyzed a large amount of beneficial planning between special districts and local general-purpose governments. The original mandatory planning goals of the GMA have all proven worthy, and the general model of state-overseen local control is one that most local governments have made work. However, more needs to be done to create true state/local partnerships for economic development. Until economic development becomes a true requirement, and not an optional one, a big part of the promise of the GMA to provide jobs for our citizens goes unmet."

Washington REALTORS® Association

Bryan Wahl, Government Affairs Director, Washington REALTORS® Association

"For 15 years, the GMA has helped guide the way for managing growth and improving the quality of life in communities. Yet, we face many challenges in our ability to accommodate growth and ensure there is sufficient land capacity available for new homes and jobs. In order to ensure the GMA is successfully carried out, we must have sufficient land capacity for new jobs and homes and adopt measures to ensure a sufficient supply of housing is available for projected growth. Our Quality of Life Project is a public education program that generates ideas about how our state can continue to manage growth."

Views from state leaders on growth management

By Rita R. Robison, AICP, *About Growth* Editor

In addition to asking local governments how they think growth management is working in their communities, we also requested information from leaders in land use planning throughout the state and state agencies.

Mark Hinshaw, FAIA, FAICP, Director of Urban Design for LMN Architects

In working with many cities and towns during the last 15 years, it's evident that at least one major change is occurring in how local governments are operating. "Prior to the GMA, public investments in infrastructure – including parks and community facilities, as well as streets and utilities – were often scattered, on the edge of a community, and unrelated to each another.

"The GMA is providing cities with a great tool to use to focus public investments. For cities that do this aggressively, the results are dramatic. Seeing the financial commitment, the private sector comes to the table and provides forms of development that some communities have not seen in decades, if ever. And it's fascinating to observe this happening in so many places, from Bellingham to Burien, from Walla Walla to Washougal."

Joe Tovar, FAICP, Planner and Former Member of the Central Puget Sound Growth Management Hearings Board

The most important way the GMA is helping communities is that comprehensive plans are now truly comprehensive and local actions must be consistent with them. "Comprehensiveness and consistency have changed the way that planning and planners operate. Plans now do more than simply explain the zoning map – they provide direction to capital budget priorities and link local policies and actions to county-wide or even regional plans."

Keith Dearborn, Attorney and Planner

Keith Dearborn believes consistency is one of the GMA's most important contributions. "All three growth boards have said repeatedly that a development regulation must implement a comprehensive plan. Prior to 1990, this wasn't the case. Updates and amendments to comprehensive plans and development regulations need to be developed at the same time to ensure consistency, for a comprehensive plan is now more a blueprint than a guide."

William Grimes, AICP, Principal, Studio Cascade Inc.

William Grimes thinks innovation in planning is one of the most important results of the GMA. "Communities are finding new and more effective ways to craft their long-term plans – producing plans that make sense, are accessible to the general public, and actually get things done. The GMA challenged Washington planners to write practical, sensible plans, and although we've struggled with a variety of approaches over the last 15 years, creativity in method has emerged as a controlling concept."

Elizabeth Robbins, Policy Development and Regional Coordination Branch Manager, Washington State Department of Transportation

"The most important outcome of the GMA for the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) over the past 15 years is the restructuring of local and regional transportation planning. When the GMA is functioning at the local level, it helps the WSDOT planning and project development processes by providing predictability, consistency, and certainty."

Jay Manning, Director, Washington State Department of Ecology

When the GMA was created, the Department of Ecology gained a unique opportunity to work in new ways with local communities to protect and improve the quality of life across the state. Today, Ecology is helping communities update and fine-tune their critical area ordinances to ensure that water supplies are protected, and that flood hazards do not threaten life and property.

**Washington State Department of Community,
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